

COMMUNITY BRIEFING

J. MITCHELL WALLER, CHIEF OF POLICE



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A Message from the Chief



As your new Chief of Police, I want to take this opportunity to introduce myself. On January 4, 2010, I was sworn into office to replace retiring Chief Andrew Hall. Chief Hall commanded the department for the past seven years and ensured the department was in good order when I assumed command. I look forward to serving our community while leading an exceptional team of men and women.

I have served as Captain, Detective Commander, SWAT Commander and Special Operations Commander with the Westminster Police Department and will be celebrating my 26th anniversary with the Department in May. In addition to my years of law enforcement experience, I have a law degree from the Chapman University School of Law, a bachelor's degree in biochemistry from the University of California at San Diego and attended the FBI National Academy in Quantico, Virginia.

The City of Westminster enjoys being ranked among the top 100 safest cities in the nation and is policed by a nationally recognized law enforcement agency. Such an accomplishment is the result of the community

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working hand-in-hand with its police department, city staff, and various service and community organizations. The men and women of the Westminster Police Department are committed to a community oriented policing style while serving with excellence. Our philosophy is simple, *Service with Integrity*. It is truly an honor to be appointed as your new Chief of Police.

Please enjoy this edition of the Community Briefing. It offers you valuable information and advice regarding the new Cell Phone Laws and also Identity Theft as well as a glimpse into the inner workings of our department. Those interested in keeping in touch with retired Chief Hall may contact him at Senator Lou Correa's office, where he has accepted a position as the Chief of Staff, (714) 558-4400.

History on Cell Phone Law – Its Importance and Alarming Statistics



On July 1, 2008, the California Legislation enacted a law that prohibits drivers from using a wireless telephone while operating a motor vehicle unless the driver uses a hands-free device. Drivers who violate the law face a base fine of \$20 for a first offense and \$50 for each subsequent offense. On January 1, 2009, the law was amended to prohibit drivers from texting while driving.

Recently, The National Safety Council (NSC) called for a nationwide ban on cell phone use while driving. Specifically the Council requested all motorists to stop using cell phones and messaging devices while driving.

They also urged businesses to enact policies prohibiting such use. The NSC states that there is no shortage of data supporting the need for this action. Using cell phones while driving is very high risk behavior with significant impact on crashes and society. More than 50 peer-reviewed scientific studies have identified the risks associated with cell phone use while driving.

Submit Feedback to:
 Ja'Nelle Belton, WPD Police Services Officer –
 Community Relations
 Email: Jbelton@westminster-ca.gov

Cell Phone Use & Driving

Drivers that use cell phones are four times as likely to get into crashes serious enough to injure themselves (NHTSA, Insurance Institute for Highway Safety).

Cell phone use contributes to an estimated 6 percent of all crashes, which equates to 636,000 crashes, 330,000 injuries, 12,000 serious injuries and 2,600 deaths each year. (Harvard Center of Risk Analysis).

80% of crashes are related to driver inattention. There are certain activities that may be more dangerous than talking on a cell phone. However, cell phone use occurs more frequently and for longer durations than other, riskier behaviors. Thus, the #1 source of driver inattention is cell phones. (Virginia Tech 100-car study for NHTSA).

The best way to protect yourself from cell phone related accidents and offenses is by not talking on the phone while you are driving.

It is estimated that more than 100 million people use cell phones while driving. (CTIA – The Wireless Association reports 270 million cell phone subscribers. A Nationwide Insurance public opinion poll showed 81 percent of the public admit to

talking on a cell phone while driving).

The annual cost of crashes caused by cell phone use is estimated to be \$43 billion (Harvard Center for Risk Analysis).

Talking to a passenger while driving is significantly safer than talking on a cell phone. (University of Utah).

Driving while using a cell phone reduces the amount of brain activity associated with driving by 37%. (Carnegie Mellon).

Distraction from cell phone use while driving (hand held or hands free) extends a driver's reaction as much as having a blood alcohol concentration at the legal limit of .08% (University of Utah).

The No.1 source of driver inattention is use of a wireless device (Virginia Tech /NHTSA).

10% of drivers aged 16 to 24 years old are on their phone at any one time.

The Westminster Police Department has issued 1,025 cell phone tickets this past year (1/1/09-1/1/10). That is 284 more citations than those written for not wearing a seatbelt (741) even though there was a Click It or Ticket Seatbelt grant that specifically paid for

increased enforcement aimed at seatbelt violators, and no cell phone grant aimed against those violators. It is apparent from the numbers that drivers feel it is safer to talk on a phone than not wearing a seatbelt.

As seen from the statistics above, however, it is very risky behavior and has resulted in countless accidents due to inattention. The following ten officers wrote the highest number of cell phone tickets this past year.

1. Officer Paul Walker (136)
2. Officer Scott Storey (111)
3. Officer Dan McCarthy (77)
4. Officer James Delk (72)
5. Officer Mark Lauderback (68)
6. Officer Jeremy Fletcher (51)
7. Officer John Leahy (51)
8. Officer Cameron Knauerhaze (50)
9. Officer Bill Eifert (45)
10. Officer Jerad Kent (39)

Thanks to the rest of you that wrote several citations for this section as well. Your diligent efforts do not go unnoticed.

New Faces



Officer Stewart DeJong

On January 4, 2010, WPD hired a new lateral police officer. Stewart DeJong came to us after spending seven years as a patrol officer for the Cal State Fullerton Police Department. DeJong's assignments at CSUFPD included FTO, Taser Instructor, and North OC SWAT member.



Dispatcher Amber Lancaster

On March 3, 2010, Amber Lancaster was sworn in as our newest Communications Dispatcher. She came to us after spending time as a patrol officer for Pasadena PD. Her husband is a police officer for Huntington Beach PD. Amber holds a Bachelor's Degree from the University of Hawaii.

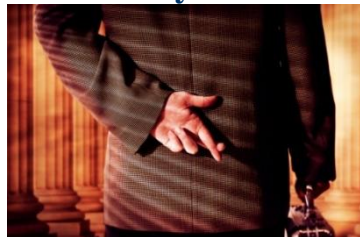
Sexual Assault Felony Enforcement (SAFE) Task Force

Westminster Police Department has recently joined the SAFE team. The mission of the SAFE team is to investigate all violations of federal law as they relate to violent crime with an emphasis on crimes against children, and to prosecute those violations both in

Federal Court and State Court, utilizing that venue which best addresses the SAFE Team objectives. Those investigations will include but, are not limited to the following violations: child sex crimes, child pornography, child abduction and other child exploitation matters.

Detective Claudia Fletes currently assigned to Sex Crimes in the Crimes Against Persons unit, will soon be sworn in as a federal officer. Duties related to this task force will be worked as a collateral assignment.

Identity Theft



Identity theft is a criminal offense. It occurs when a person knowingly transfers or uses, without lawful authority, a means of identification of another person with the intent to commit or to aid or abet any unlawful activity that constitutes a violation of federal law or that constitutes a felony under any applicable state or local law.

- Identity Theft and Assumption Deterrence Act, 18 USC 1028[a][7]

In what many are calling America's fastest growing type of robbery, crooks are working without the usual

tools of the trade. Forget sawed-off shotguns and ski masks: your name and social security number will do the trick, or that blank, pre-approved credit application you tossed out with the coffee grounds. Even talking on your phone or surfing the Internet can allow someone you may never meet to rob you of the one thing you may have thought safe from attack: your identity.

Identity fraud is digging deep into consumers' pockets — more than \$48 billion was lost in the past year by financial institutions and businesses, and individuals lost an estimated \$5 billion.

The number of ID theft victims and their total losses are probably much higher than reported. It's hard to pin down, because law enforcement agencies may classify ID theft differently--it can involve credit card fraud, Internet fraud, or mail theft, among other crimes.

The perpetrator may use a variety of tactics to obtain your personal information and drain your finances: posing as a loan officer and ordering your credit report (which lists lines of credit); "shoulder surfing" at the ATM or phone booth to get your PIN code; "dumpster diving" in trash bins behind businesses or apartments for unshredded credit applications, canceled checks, bank records or any documents containing personal information; or,

stealing mail right out of your own mailbox.

It may take months before you realize you're a victim of identity theft. But, when you get turned down for credit, a car loan, or a mortgage on your dream house because you've got a bad credit rating and you know you've paid your bills, beware: The ID thief may have struck again.

Do you carry your social security number in your wallet? Consider this: That nine-digit code gives crooks access to your medical, financial, credit, and educational records. There are no legal restrictions on private company use of social security numbers. In fact, a database of names with associated social security numbers was recently found published on the Internet. What's worse, some states still use your social security number for your driver's license number -- a policy that is, fortunately, changing.

If you think you're safe because you canceled your credit cards and put a "stop" on your checking account after your wallet was stolen, think again. Once identity thieves have your information, they may open new accounts or lines of credit — under your name, for their use.

Last year alone, an estimated ten million Americans were victims of identity theft. The culprits may be employees (or

patrons) of mailrooms, airlines, hotels, or personnel offices — anyone who has access to financial information. Thieves may use your credit card or encoding equipment (sold by business-supply companies) and blank cards with magnetic strips to record your account number onto a counterfeit card with a different name. Crooks sometimes seek jobs that will give them access to financial information, or they may bribe employees in such positions to supply them with the data they want.

Need a phony ID to "prove" you're the person whose name is on the credit card? Try surfing the Web. There are scores of sites with instructions on how to create a "new you." If you've got your own computer, scanner, and color printer or copier, you can create your own false IDs.

What can you do to protect yourself from becoming a victim of ID theft? Please consider putting into practice the following tips:

- Deposit outgoing mail at a Post Office or a blue U.S. Postal Service collection box, or give it directly to your letter carrier.
- Shred or tear up unwanted documents that contain personal information before discarding them.

- Review your consumer credit reports annually.
- Never give personal information over the phone or the Internet unless you initiated the contact.
- Call the fraud units of the three major credit bureaus listed below and request a "fraud alert" be placed on your credit file. Check your monthly financial statements for accuracy.
- Order copies of your credit report from the credit bureaus listed below to check whether any fraudulent accounts were opened without your knowledge or consent. Report suspected credit card fraud to the three major credit reporting bureaus, which you may contact online or by phone:

1. [Equifax](#): 800-525-6285
2. [Experian](#): 888-397-3742
3. [TransUnion](#): 800-680-7289

Contact your financial institutions and request they flag your accounts. Instruct them to contact you immediately if there is unusual activity on your accounts.
